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**Congress of the United States**  
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August 27, 2021

Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary  
Department of State  
2201 C St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Re: Contingency and Crisis Response Bureau and Afghanistan Withdrawal

Dear Secretary Blinken,

As Americans and the world-at-large watch in dismay at the frantic scenes coming from Kabul, we are all concerned for the safety of our fellow countrymen. I am equally concerned with the lack of preparation for this contingency. Questions regarding this lack of preparation will be brought to the Department of Defense, however I write today concerned by reports that the State Department terminated a crisis response group in the months leading up to the Afghanistan withdrawal.

Specifically, I am referring to the Contingency and Crisis Response Bureau (CCR) established in October 2020 under the Trump Administration which was designed to handle medical, diplomatic, and logistical support concerning Americans overseas. Reports from the *National Pulse* indicate that the State Department under your watch terminated this critically important bureau just months before the Afghanistan withdrawal and the need to evacuate thousands of Americans.

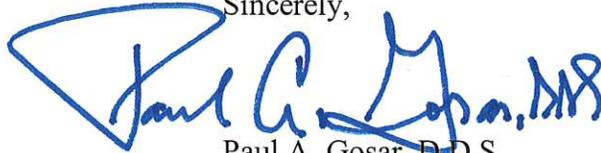
These reports stem from disclosure of an action memo from Deputy Secretary of State Brian P. McKeon dated June 11, 2021. This memo recommended “discontinuation of the establishment, and termination of, the Contingency and Crisis Response Bureau (CCR), and direct a further review of certain associated Department requirements and capabilities.” Notably, the action memo is checked in agreement of this policy.

Cancelling the CCR as the Biden Administration was preparing for the Afghanistan withdrawal is baffling and raises serious questions about how prepared the Administration was to complete this final step in Afghanistan. Reports also indicate that the decision to pause the program go back as far as February, which means this decision would have also jeopardized the withdrawal plan committed to under the Trump Administration.

If reports that the CCR has been paused since February and terminated in June are correct, it shows that State was never prepared for this withdrawal, justifying the heartbreaking and concerning reports and videos we are now seeing from Afghanistan.

I am therefore asking for confirmation on whether or not CCR was terminated and if so, on what grounds? A full scope answer of what authorities and justification were given to terminate the CCR, what the State Department felt it had in place to fill the CCR gap, and a determination of any issues for the State Department responding to this contingency would greatly aid in oversight of this withdrawal. Finally, please also indicate if elimination of the CCR was in response to any Biden Administration wide orders to reevaluate Trump era policies or the product of any lingering resentment towards the former Administration held by career or political employees. Please adhere to all rules and regulation when fulfilling this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.". The signature is stylized and includes a large, looped initial "P" on the left side.

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.  
Member of Congress